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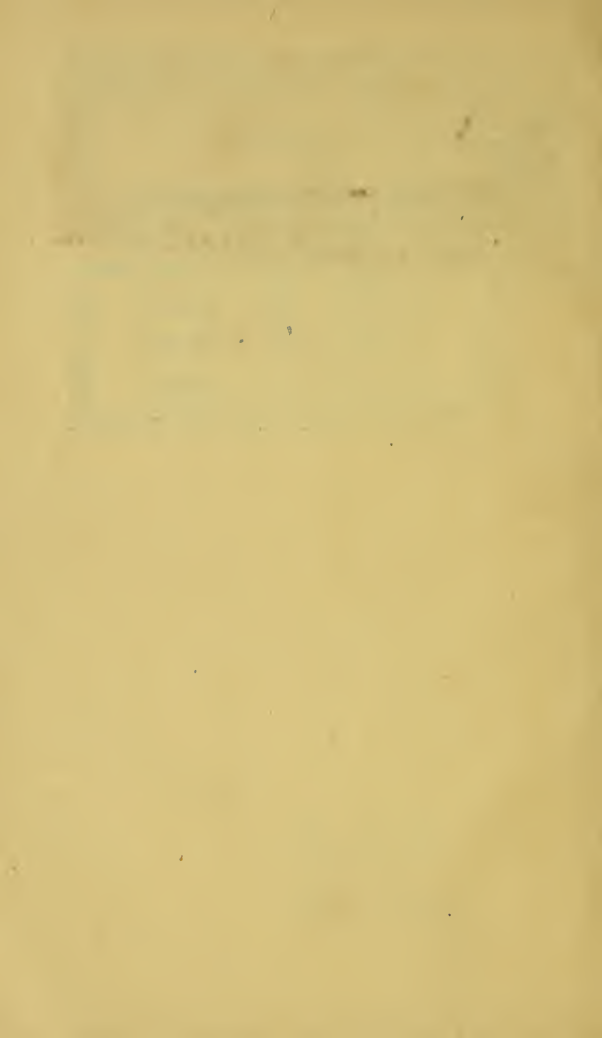
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THE SAINT

AND

THE SINNER.

BY THE

✓
REV. WILLIAM S. PLUMER, D. D.



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THE SAINT AND THE SINNER.

THE BIBLE never confounds the righteous and the wicked. It never describes a man in doubtful terms. It never puts light for darkness, nor darkness for light. If God is true, the saint and the sinner are unlike. Every man is either just or unjust, a child of God or a child of the devil. To be both or to be neither is impossible. In God's kingdom there is no neutrality. Every man is a friend or a foe, a child or an alien, an heir of God or an heir of perdition. Every man is now going, as rapidly as time can carry him, towards

heaven or towards hell. Nor will it be long before he reaches the end of his journey, and begins the hallelujahs of heaven, or the wailings of despair. The stamp of eternity and the seal of immutability will soon be put on every soul. Then he who is holy, shall be holy still; and he who is filthy, shall be filthy still.

“To which class do I belong?” is a momentous question, fit to be asked by every man.

It is readily admitted that no man is as good or bad as he will be in a future state. No Christian is yet perfect; nor is sin yet finished. In the Christian are the remains of “the old man” with his sinful lusts and habits. In the sinner are the remains of conscience, natural affection, and the effects of some good education. But the elements of their characters, are as different as gold and dross, as wheat and chaff, as sheep and goats. One is a

saint. The other is a sinner. One loves what the other hates, and hates what the other loves. One rejoices in what the other weeps over, and weeps over what the other rejoices in. In the elements of moral character there is a perfect contrast. Heaven and hell are not more unlike.

It is admitted that there are seeming contradictions in the Christian. Many things are true of him, which seem absurd to men who have no spiritual discernment. But no good man is ashamed of these things. Many of them are the glory of religion. "Wisdom is justified of her children." To give up all that seems mysterious to a carnal mind would be a surrender of the essence of saving truth. Men count many things weak and foolish, which are above all price. "The weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

Let us look at each character by itself.

THE SAINT.

He lives as seeing a God, who is and ever shall be invisible. He believes in a being whom no man has seen, or can see and live. He believes that there is one, and but one God; yet he believes there are three persons or distinctions in his nature, by which he subsists as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Yet he believes the Father to be no older than the Son, but both to be eternal. He believes the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, to be eternal also; and all three persons to be equal in power and glory, and the same in substance or essence. So that there are three persons in one nature. As to the Lord Jesus Christ, he believes that He has two natures in one person for ever, and yet without mixture. He believes that He was the maker of his own

mother, and that his mother was a virgin. He believes that He, who made swaddling-bands for the sea, was himself wrapped in swaddling-bands. He looks upon his Saviour as so great that the heaven of heavens could not contain him, and so condescending that he once lay in a stable. He believes that He, who hath life in himself, was once dead. He believes that Jesus Christ never offended his Father, and that yet that very Father said: "Awake, O sword, and smite the man that is my fellow." He knows that God is just, and yet poured out his wrath on one who never sinned. He believes that God will not clear the guilty, and yet that he justifies the most ungodly sinners, who believe in Jesus. He accounts pardon most free, yet believes it was purchased at the greatest price. "He believes himself to be precious in God's sight, yet loathes himself in his own sight. He dares not justify himself in those

things, wherein he can find no fault in himself, and yet believes that God accepts him in those services, wherein he is able to find many faults." He believes many things, which he cannot comprehend, and yet has good cause for all that he does believe. He knows far more than he once did, yet thinks he knows little or nothing. He walks not by sight, yet he is neither blind nor in darkness.

He hopes for things which he could not describe or form a conception of. He is confident that he shall reach a world, not one of whose inhabitants he has ever seen. He knows that God is merciful; therefore he fears him. He knows that he is just; therefore he praises him. He approaches God boldly, yet is so ashamed that he cannot look up. He often boasts, but is always humble. He expects all blessings, yet always confesses he deserves none. He is both a worm and a hero. He fears

always, yet is never a coward. He deceives many, and is yet true. He is unknown, and yet well known. He dies daily, and yet he is more alive every day. He bears strokes of chastisement, which would kill a wicked man, and yet he says, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted." He is often sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. He is poor, yet has great riches. He has nothing, yet possesses all things. No man sighs so much, yet no man gives half so many thanks. He does not seek great things, yet he aspires to a kingdom. In whatsoever state he is, he is content; yet he is never satisfied, nor will he be, till he awakes with God's likeness.

Before God he is all abasement. Before man he neither cringes, nor trembles. He is strongest when he is weakest, and is farthest from meanness when he is most humble. He can pardon a great fault in another, but cannot forgive a small fault in himself. He is

rich when men count him poor, and poor when men count him rich. He believes that the world is his, yet he will not touch it without leave. He knows that God has given him richly all things to enjoy, yet finds great pleasure in self-denial. He serves God without sordidly bargaining for any thing, yet he expects the very largest reward. He saves his life by losing it. He is exceedingly wise for himself, yet is not selfish. No man has so many sorrows and reproaches, yet no man has so many comforts and honours. The more he forsakes the world, the more he enjoys it. The more he makes war on himself, the more is he reconciled to his lot.

He is full of revenge, yet has no malice. His worst enemies often do him the greatest services without intending it. To his dearest friend he is sometimes compelled to say, "Get behind me, Satan. Thou savourest not the things that be of God." He loves

and cherishes his own flesh, yet keeps his body under, hates his own life, and is temperate in all things. He loves all men as himself, yet hates some men with a perfect hatred. He is the best child, husband, brother, friend, yet hates father and mother, brother and sister. He does good and lends, hoping for nothing again; yet expects an hundred fold more in this world, and in the world to come, life everlasting. He has no strength, yet can do all things. "He desires to have more grace than any man in the world has, yet is truly sorry when he sees any man have less than himself." He calls no man father or master, yet is most careful to give honour to whom honour is due. "He knows that if he please man, he cannot be the servant of Christ; yet for Christ's sake he pleases all men in all things." When he sleeps his heart wakes, yet no man sleeps so sweetly. He has the peace of God,

which passes all understanding, yet has fightings without, and fears within. He is the most peaceable of men, yet is ever at war.

Great carefulness is wrought in him, yet he is careful for nothing, having cast all his care upon the Lord. He often sharply reproofs a friend, but speaks words of kindness to an enemy. So surely as you greatly injure him, he will pray for you. He heartily thanks the meanest man for any kindness, yet he never thanks the greatest angels for their greatest kindnesses. The word of God is to him life and joy, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, yet he trembles at it and is afraid. "He would lay down his life to save the soul of his enemy, yet will not venture on one sin to save the life of one who has saved his life."

In honour he prefers others, yet knows that by his birth from above he is more honourable than if he had had a

king for his father and a queen for his mother. He remembers kindness for life, but tries to banish even from his memory all acts of unkindness. He contemns the wicked, however great, and honours the righteous, however humble. No man puts a higher value on a good name, yet he seeks not the honour that comes from man. To him a palace is often as a prison, and a prison as a palace. Though a servant, he is free. He swears to his own hurt and changes not.

He knows that when he has done all that he is commanded to do, he is but an unprofitable servant. His hope of salvation is all of grace. He believes on Christ, as if he had no works, yet he works as if his heaven depended on himself. He works out his salvation with fear and trembling, yet says, "What I am, I am by the grace of God." He uses means, but does not rely on them. He believes God's counsel is fixed, and

that he knows the end from the beginning, yet he is not repelled from the mercy-seat, nor given over to sloth. He fervently prays for perfect holiness in this life, though he knows he shall not attain to it. If he knows a blessing is about to come upon him, he prays most fervently for it. He daily prays, "Lead me not into temptation," yet counts it all joy when he falls into divers temptations. He is often grateful for things which he earnestly prayed against. He finds prayer useful even when he fails to get the things he prays for.

"He has within him both flesh and spirit, yet he is not a double-minded man. He is often led captive by the law of sin, yet sin has not dominion over him. He cannot sin because the seed of God remains within him, yet he does nothing without sin. He does nothing against his will, yet he maintains that he does what he would not."

He would not change states with the mightiest king, yet would be of all men the most miserable, if he did not expect a speedy and great improvement in his condition. He may now be employed in sweeping the street, yet he looks for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. He knows that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, yet in his flesh he hopes to see God.

“He is often tossed and shaken, yet is as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed. He is a serpent and a dove; a lamb and a lion; a reed and a cedar. He is sometimes so troubled that he thinks nothing true in religion; yet if he did think so, he could not be at all troubled. He sometimes thinks that God has no mercy for him, yet he seeks for it.” Even when faint he pursues. He runs and is not weary. He walks and is not faint. His foes are mightier than he, yet he van-

quishes them. He cannot argue as some, but he can trust where reason is confounded. If he cannot define the Christian graces, he can exercise them, and that is better. The more he feels his unworthiness, the more is he settled in purpose not to let God go without a blessing. He sees and laments the infirmities of Christians, yet counts them the excellent of the earth. "He sometimes thinks he has no grace at all, yet even then he would not change places with the most prosperous man under heaven, who is a manifest worldling."

He often blames himself for not loving the house of God more, yet he would rather be a door-keeper there, than dwell in the tents of wickedness. When he is most full he is most empty. "He was born dead; yet it would have been murder to kill him. After he began to live, he was always dying." And when he shall be dead, then he will live for ever. He weeps at the

thought of the crucifixion of Christ, yet he is constantly crucifying the flesh, with its affections and lusts. "He lives invisible to those that see him, for his life is hid with Christ in God. Those, that know him best, do not know him at all; yet these very persons often judge more truly of him than he does of himself." The world sometimes extols him for things over which he weeps, and hates him for things in which he glories. "He expects to be as full of glory as those who shall have more, and no more full than those who shall have less." His death is the beginning of his life and bliss. "His soul is not to be perfected without the body; yet his soul is more happy when it is separated from the body than it was before." His body will awake in beauty and freshness from a sleep in which it fell into utter decay and ruin.

In the last day, "his Advocate, his Surety, shall be his Judge; his mortal

part shall become immortal; and what was sown in corruption and defilement, shall be raised in incorruption and glory; and a finite creature shall possess infinite happiness." He shall be a companion of all the good, and of God himself. He shall have his home on the banks of the river of life.

To those, who know nothing except what they know naturally as brute beasts, all this matter is foolishness. But to those who are taught from above, and who have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, it is full of light and life and joy. These things have a full explanation in the word of God, and in the experience of his people. Blessed are all they who have an unction that teacheth them all things. Having viewed the saint, let us look at

THE SINNER.

If there be mysteries in godliness, are there no mysteries in iniquity? If

there be paradoxes in the righteous, are there not absurdities in the wicked? The more you consider them, the greater do these absurdities appear. In eternity, they will appear greatest of all.

Many a sinner, who admits that there is a God, says in his heart and life that there is no God. He could not live more as if he knew that there was no God, if he knew that there was none. With a God in his creed, he is "without God in the world." Many a sinner says he cannot believe what he cannot comprehend, yet he is constrained to confess that he comprehends nothing. The same man will often believe the most incredible things, and yet refuse assent to truths to which God has set the seal of his word, oath, and providence. He thinks that God is altogether such an one as himself, yet he knows God to be infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and possessed of all perfection; and himself to be finite, a worm

of yesterday, changing every day, and without one perfection.

He says God is a hard master, gathering where he has not strewed, and reaping where he has not sowed. Yet he acts as if he knew that God would not reap where he had sowed, nor gather where he had strewed. He says God is a hard master, yet he does all he can to increase his responsibilities to him. See how he covets gain, influence, talents, power, all which will swell his dread account. He says God is great, yet he insults him daily, is bold to impudence even towards his Maker, and thinks of him with shocking irreverence. If God were a worm, he could not treat him with more contempt. He fears man, whose breath is in his nostrils, more than the great God, who can cast both soul and body into hell. He often thinks himself some great one, yet he lightly esteems immortality, virtue, and communion with God, which

alone can make any man great. He greatly dreads to be a laughing-stock, yet is not afraid of sin, which alone can make any man despicable. He stubbornly pursues a course, which he knows must bring on him shame and everlasting contempt, the derision of God, and the laugh of angels and men.

He knows he must soon die, yet he lives, and plans, and plants, and sows, and reaps, and garners up, and pulls down, and builds as if he were to live for ever. He admits some errors in his head and life, but thinks his heart good. Yet his heart is by far the worst part about him. It is desperately wicked. His whole course points infallibly towards sin and hell, yet he expects not to be lost. He intends to repent of the very course he is pursuing. He is alive without the law, yet he is dead by the law. He is most dead when he is most alive.

He is so keen-sighted that he can see a mote, and yet so blind that he cannot see a beam. He often has a view of the future, which surprises others, yet he knows not what a day may bring forth. He knows not but that in an hour he may be among the damned, yet seems as quiet as if he were in covenant with God. He lusts, and has not. He desires to have, and cannot obtain. He asks, and receives not, because he asks amiss. He has ears which are charmed with eloquence, music, and good news from a far country. Yet he is deaf as an adder to the best news that ever reached him. No music in heaven would please him. The songs of angels are to him dull. The most eloquent writing on earth has for him no attractions. He often has a better understanding than his neighbours, yet lives and dies without wisdom. In earthly things, he knows much. In heavenly

things, he acts like a madman. The bee, the ant, the stork, might instruct him.

He loves father, mother, wife and children, more than he loves God, yet he does not love them half so well as if he loved them infinitely less than God. His love to them does not make him their real friend. The more he loves them, the greater hinderance is he to their salvation. The world is to him every day a cheat and a liar, yet he trusts it more and more. Often as he has mistrusted it, he has not learned to distrust it. His heart is deceitful above all things, yet he has no jealous watch over it. He still confides more in his own evil heart, than in the best men on earth, yea, more than in the God of truth. He boasts much of liberty, but is always the slave of sin. He has three cruel task-masters, the world, the flesh, and the devil. He serves them day and night. He makes brick without straw.

He works for nothing, and finds himself. He feeds on husks; yet he boasts of liberty.

“License he means, when he cries liberty;
For who loves that, must first be wise and good.”

The more he enjoys, the less enjoyment he has. He often confesses as much. Gardiner wished he was a dog, and Voltaire wished that he had never been born. He hopes for better things, when all the evidence is on the other side. His very pleasures make him miserable. The wages of sin is death. In the midst of plenty, he is poor. His soul is perishing, though food suited to it is all around him. He is noisy in his mirth, yet has continual sorrow. He is pained if others count him not happy, yet he seldom thinks himself so. He often has a peace which the thunders of Sinai do not break, yet he has no peace, but is always like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. He trembles

and flies to an insurance office, when he thinks that *possibly* his house may be burned down. But he uses no precaution against the greatest losses, although he knows that the world will *certainly* be burned up. He loses his good name by thinking too much of it. He loses his property by keeping it. He loses his life by saving it.

He hopes to be saved by works, which are hateful to God. He expects to have a fit raiment to go in to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, although he has no covering but the filthy rags of his own righteousness. He has no merit of his own, yet will not beg for mercy. He is poor to starvation, yet is too proud to receive salvation as a gratuity. He hopes for a change in the terms of salvation, though God has said they shall remain unaltered, and reason shows that any change would bring dishonour on God and loss on man. He often piques himself on his birth,

yet he is of his father the devil, and his works will he do. He talks much of wisdom, purity, innocence, courage, and candour, but he has none of them. He is a serpent in nothing but venom and guile. He is a dove in nothing but silliness. He is a lamb in nothing but feebleness. He is a lion in nothing but fierceness. In understanding, he is a child; in malice, he is a man; in enmity to God, he is a demon.

The fewer his fears, the more cause of fear has he. The brighter his hopes, the worse his prospects. The more sure he is of heaven, the more sure he is to come short of it. He looks with alternate envy and scorn upon the righteous. He knows that in the last day he will think it a great privilege to be of their number, yet when offered the same blessings, he is often offended. He knows that he is a sinner, and yet thinks himself good enough. He despises the very blessings which he

envies in others. He hates those most, who love him best. He is slowest in being reconciled to those, whom he has most injured.

He loves ease, yet toils for misery, and searches for her as for hid treasures. He loves life above all things, and yet he loves death more, for he refuses life when it is offered him, and chooses death when it is set before him. He digs into hell. He sleeps not except he has done some mischief. Christians may let a day pass without doing any good, but he does some evil every day. He knows that every wise man tries to do everything in its season; yet he sleeps in harvest, and lies in the shade all summer, and at last cries, "The harvest is past; the summer is ended; and I am not saved." With him it is a rule to do the most important things first, yet he invariably puts them off to the last. You shall find him given up to vanity and trifles,

when he ought to be *agonizing* to enter in at the strait gate.

He will not risk any cause in court without skilful counsel. Yet he ventures to go before the Judge of all the earth, and stand his trial for *eternal* life, without an Advocate, though the very best one is offered him without money and without price. In time none perhaps denied his sagacity, but in eternity all, himself included, will confess that he was a fool. When wearied in the greatness of his way, he does not say, "There is no hope." He dies without instruction, though surrounded by teachers: and in the greatness of his folly he goes astray, though he sees the path of safety plain before him. He becomes a wandering star, and goes blazing through darkness into the blackness of darkness for ever. Lo! this is the man that made not God his strength!

IMMEDIATE CONTRASTS.

The points of contrast in the saint and sinner, might be almost indefinitely extended. Take a few more in immediate connexion. Of the righteous it is said, that his giving a cup of cold water shall be rewarded, his prayer heard, his sacrifice accepted, and his counsel fulfilled. Of the wicked it is said, his ploughing is sin, and his sacrifice an abomination to the Lord. "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." The righteous weeps over his own sins, and the sins of others; but "fools make a mock at sin." "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." "He that doeth righteousness is righteous; he

that committeth sin is of the devil.” “Surely the Lord scorneth the scornful; but he giveth grace unto the lowly.” “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.”

God says, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.” “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith.” To the wicked he says, “I will curse your blessings,” and “the rust of your gold and silver shall eat your flesh, as it were fire.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” but “God is angry with the wicked every day.” The Bible says, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.” It also says, “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked,” and

there it leaves him. Of the righteous, it says, "He is a green olive-tree in the house of the Lord; he trusts in the mercy of God for ever and ever." Of the wicked, David says, "I have seen him in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo! he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Of saints, Paul says, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." God says, "When the wicked do spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." David says, "Surely salvation is nigh them that fear the Lord," but "salvation is far from the wicked." Of Jesus Christ, the righteous says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his. He is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. He is altogether lovely."

But to the wicked, Christ is "as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when they see him, there is no beauty that they should desire him." To the wicked, Christ crucified is a stumbling-block and foolishness. But to the righteous, "Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Every good man is ready to say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

God declares that the deliverances of the righteous are preservations, but those of the wicked are reservations. Paul says, what each believer may say, "The Lord will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." Job says, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction." David says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe." But

of the wicked, Isaiah says, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding places, and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." All the Scriptures represent the victory of the righteous as complete, and their triumph as eternal; but God says, "the triumphing of the wicked is short." "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." "When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting." "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death." "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot." The righteous dies, and is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The wicked is buried, and in hell he lifts up his eyes, being in tor-

ments. The righteous shall have "boldness in the day of judgment;" but "the wicked shall not stand in the judgment."

Jesus Christ said to the righteous, "Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh." But to the wicked he said, "Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep." One apostle says to the righteous, "Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice." Another says to sinners, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep." At death the troubles of the righteous are fully and for ever ended, and their eternal joys begin. God wipes away all tears from their faces, and they are at rest. But at death, the joys of the wicked are fully and for ever ended, and eternal sorrow begins. On them God will rain snares, fire, brimstone, and an horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup.

Reader, what sayest thou? What wilt thou do? Decide something. This thing which I have said unto thee, "is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. If thou love the Lord thy God, if thou walk in his ways, and keep his commandments and statutes, thou mayest live, and the Lord thy God shall bless thee. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish. I call

heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him, for he is thy life, and the length of thy days." There is mercy, will you not seek it? There is pardon, will you not accept it? O come, come to Jesus Christ. Come, and welcome, to Jesus Christ.

THE END.



